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Time Out

▶ Tomorrow:

Tyler Perry musical coming to the Adler

Editor: Todd Welvaert
(309) 797-0331
twelvaert@qconline.com

BEST BETS

'Ring of Fire: The Johnny Cash Musical' enters its final month at Circa '21 Dinner Playhouse with performances at 7:45 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 5:45 p.m. Sunday, and 1:30 and 7:45 p.m. Wednesday, all preceded by a buffet. For tickets, call 786-7733, ext. 2.

It will be like 'Chris-mas' this weekend as Chris 'Boom-Boom' Johnson and Chris Schlicting run a comedy tag team from 9 to 11 p.m. Thursday through Saturday at Edje Nightclub, Jumer's Casino & Hotel, Interstate 280 and Illinois 92, Rock Island. (309) 756-4600.

'John Bloom: Visions of Iowa' opens at the Figge

By Jonathan Turner
jturner@qconline.com

While his wife, Isabel Bloom, may have the more famous name, the artistic legacy of John Bloom may be more profound and significant.

Bloom (1906-2002) was married to Isabel for 63 years. He was a man of visionary talents — drawing, painting, sculpting, lithography — and produced art for 80 years.

The first major Quad-Cities exhibition of his work since his death — "John Bloom: Visions of Iowa" — opens this weekend at the Figge Art Museum, Davenport. A sneak preview is 6 to 9 tonight (free to members, with paid admission for non-members) before it opens Saturday in the Print Gallery. A cash bar and light snacks will be available.

"John was very good at what he did," said Dave Losasso, owner of Mississippi Fine Arts in the Village of East Davenport, and a close friend of Mr. Bloom. Mr. Losasso has perhaps 100 Bloom artworks in his shop, including drawings he made in 1928 while at the Art Institute of Chicago.

John Greenwood / staff

Dave Losasso, a good friend of John Bloom, reads the description tag for 'Toiling,' a sculpture Mr. Bloom created in 1935. A new exhibit of John Bloom artwork opens Saturday at the Figge Art Museum, Davenport.

Born in DeWitt, Iowa, Mr. Bloom attended St. Ambrose College, studied at the Tri-City Art League School in Davenport, and enrolled at the Art Institute in 1926. In his third year there, he taught drawing and composition.

His oil painting "Burial" caught the attention of artist Grant Wood (of "American Gothic" fame) when it won a prize in the 1932 Iowa Art Salon. Mr. Wood invited him to attend his Stone City Art Colony, and it was there that Mr. Bloom met his bride-to-be, Isabel Scherer. His success in getting the contract for a mural in the DeWitt Post Office late in 1937 encouraged him to propose, and they married in 1938 and lived in Davenport.

Mr. Wood (1891-1942) was a founder of the acclaimed Regionalist art movement. These artists "shunned the frenetic lifestyle of the metropolis and focused on depicting the American heartland," said Rima Girnius, Ph.D., associate curator at the Figge.

"Regionalists really believed in painting what they knew best," she said. "Americans should paint American themes."

Their work bloomed during the Great Depression, and many of the Figge exhibit pieces represent the dignity and vitality of work, she noted. Regionalist art helped "assuage the anxiety and unease felt by the public" by providing "an idealized view of rural America secure in its wealth and power," she wrote in an essay accompanying the exhibit.

▶ If you go

- ▶ **What:** "John Bloom: Visions of Iowa."
- ▶ **When:** Feb. 21 through Sept. 27, 2009.
- ▶ **Where:** Figge Art Museum, 225 W. 2nd St., Davenport.
- ▶ **Tickets:** $7; $6 for 60 and older and for students; $4 for children 3-12.
- ▶ **Information:** www.figgeart.org.

Mr. Bloom's figures represent the experiences of everyman and resonate with our present troubles, she wrote. He typically would sit behind the raised hood of his car to unobtrusively observe his subjects.

Mr. Bloom was involved in the federal Public Works of Art Project, which created jobs for unemployed artists by commissioning large-scale murals for public buildings. He and Mr. Wood painted murals for the Des Moines Public Library and Iowa State

See ▶ Bloom, B2

Such sweet sorrow

Ballet Q-C showcases new 'Romeo and Juliet'

By Jonathan Turner
jturner@qconline.com

One of the most romantic roles in ballet will be danced later this month by Jake Lyon, with some choreography by his wife, Courtney. But she doesn't dance Juliet to his Romeo.

"When we started doing kissing scenes, she never said anything," Mr. Lyon joked recently at the Ballet Quad Cities studio in Rock Island. A longtime dancer, Ms. Lyon is now associate director of the company, which is presenting an updated "Romeo and Juliet 21st Century" at the Capitol Theatre in Davenport next week.

In this dramatic, modern-day retelling of Shakespeare's play, choreographer (and former BQC artistic director) Johanne Jakhelln "challenges our perception of Prokofiev's classic score with her bold and jazzy choreography," according to the company.

▶ If you go

- ▶ **What:** "Romeo and Juliet 21st Century."
- ▶ **When:** 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 28, and 2 p.m. Sunday, March 1.
- ▶ **Where:** Capitol Theatre, 330 W. 3rd St., Davenport.
- ▶ **Tickets:** $10-$22; (563) 326-8820 or http://thecapdavenport.frontgatetickets.com.

John Greenwood / staff

Jake Lyon, a Ballet Quad Cities veteran, and Iona Newell rehearse a scene from 'Romeo and Juliet 21st Century' at Ballet Quad Cities in Rock Island.

Mr. Lyon, 30, is making his third appearance in this production. The Texas native performed Mercutio in 2003 and 2005. Because Ms. Jakhelln has returned to her native Norway, the dancers have to learn many of their new moves from video of past ballets.

Mr. Lyon and his partner, Iona Newell, are very different than the couple that danced the leads the first two times. "We work together differently, so it made sense to change some of the choreography to fit us better," he said. "It makes it more of a fresh start, something that belongs more to us."

"They are very experienced dancers, and they're going to bring a lot of depth to the stage," BQC executive director Joedy Cook said of the pair. "There is a natural chemistry between them."

Mr. Lyon started ballet relatively late (for a ballet dancer), at 18, in Redding,Calif. "It was just something to do. My best friend's girlfriend needed a companion to dance with," he said — and when he bought his first pair of ballet shoes, the owner said he could take any other classes for free.

"I started to pick it up pretty fast, and it snowballed from there," Mr. Lyon said. "I still come across challenges. My skills are still improving. I'm still caught doing silly little things I would have never have gotten into the habit of had I started earlier."

Ms. Newell, 31, started dancing at 11, growing up in a rural community outside Pittsburgh. She

See ▶ Romeo, B2

SPOTLIGHT

Eclectic sounds coming from RIBCO tonight

By Laura Anderson
landerson@radishmagazine.com

Check out some sweet tunes today at an all-ages show at Rock Island Brewing Company in the District. A combination of dance, rock and punk will kick off at 5 p.m. with bands you need to check out.

Supporting their Feb. 17 release of their first full-length record, "Watersports," on Quarterstick Records, Mi Ami will headline the show. Hailing from San Francisco, Mi Ami is Daniel Martin-McCormick on vocals and guitar, Jacob Long on the bass and Damon Palermo on drums.

"Mi Ami's work starts at the foundation of dance music, deconstructing and rebuilding it, disassembling and reanimating it," explains a biography on the Touch and Go Records Web site. "Mi Ami pulls from '60s free jazz, dub, minimalism, disco and African music, and the band manipulates rhythm, negative space and the physicality of song."

It's a bit like space noises stirred together with punk and disco, with a heavy African-funk, tribal heartbeat. But pinpointing exactly what these guys sound like is next to impossible, and comparing their sound to that of another band wouldn't do them justice.

Accompanying Mi Ami at the RIBCO show is Deer Tick, a melodic but energetic rock band out of the New York area. They've got a somewhat old-school feel, and you won't be able to keep your toe from tapping while they're playing. Their sound is common enough to be relatable to folks who appreciate all genres of music, but eclectic enough to get your attention and hold onto it.

Also making a stop at RIBCO is Thank You, a group of noisemakers out of Baltimore, Md. Their thrilljockey.com bio refers to them as an athletic rhythm/action unit. "The basics of drums, organ and guitar build the foundation," the site says, "but are augmented by whistles, cowbell, hobo harmonica, snappy loops, car horns and whatever else might be at hand."

If you are more of a mainstream music lover, this show might not be one you would regularly come out and see. But a bill like this is well worth checking out.

▶ If you go

- ▶ **What:** Mi Ami, Deer Tick and Thank You.
- ▶ **When:** 5 tonight.
- ▶ **Where:** RIBCO in The District of Rock Island.
- ▶ **Tickets:** $5.
- ▶ **Info:** www.ribco.com; www.myspace.com/miamiamiami; www.myspace.com/deertick; www.myspace.com/wethankyou.

HBO takes unforgettable 'Chance'

▶ **'Taking Chance,'** 7 p.m. Saturday, HBO.

By Rick Bentley
McClatchy Newspapers

Movies are memorable because of mighty moments. These are the scenes that pull us so close to the story, we feel that we have crossed the invisible threshold that normally relegates us to being merely observers.

These mighty moments are at their best when it is no longer a matter of whether we will remember them, but that we know we never can forget them.

Such a moment comes in the powerful HBO film "Taking Chance." The made-for-cable movie airs at 7 p.m. Saturday.

Kevin Bacon plays Marine Lt. Col. Michael Strobl, a career military man who volunteers to accompany the body of a dead Marine, 19-year-old Lance Cpl. Chance Phelps, as he is returned to his family for burial.

This is a duty that is not taken lightly. Every inch of the journey is designed to pay the deepest respect to the fallen hero. For those who travel with the coffin, this is one of the most important missions of their military careers.

The screenplay was written by the real Strobl, a retired Marine, and Ross Katz, based on the journal Strobl penned. Because the movie is based on real events, each scene rings with a deep honesty. That's particularly true in the scene that is the defining moment of this journey.

As part of the transportation, Strobl stands vigil while the body is unloaded from the airplane. Slowly, civilians — from the passengers on the airplane to airport workers — stop. Nothing is said. The message comes through their faces: a look of respect and sadness.

It's the moment that keeps this from being just another war movie. It burns a message deep into our hearts. "Taking Chance" is a story about the precious and fragile nature of life. It is about honor and devotion so electric that a person is willing to sacrifice that life.

Director Ross Katz shows in this one scene that it doesn't take big explosions or complicated words to create memorable film moments.

Bacon turns in the performance of his career. His Strobl is a man who understands duty but must live with what he believes is a failing in his personality. He opts to accept a safe assignment on the homefront rather than joining his fellow Marines in Iraq.

HBO

In 'Taking Chance,' Kevin Bacon stars as Lt. Col. Michael Strobl, who escorts the remains of Lance Cpl. Chance Phelps back to his Wyoming home town. In this scene Bacon is seen with Nicholas Reese, playing his son, Nate.

Strobl is such a stoic character, it would have been easy for Bacon to fall into the trap of playing him mechanically. But there is never any doubt how emotional this journey is to him.

Had this movie been released in theaters, it would have all but assured Bacon an Oscar nod. He will have to be content with knowing he is the early frontrunner for an Emmy next year.

It doesn't matter what your views are about war. "Taking Chance" is the best story about the people who go to war since "The Best Years of Our Lives."

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